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SOURCE

Neue Zuercher Zeitung

KOSANOVIC CONTRADICTS PARTY LINE ON 1941 EVESTS IN "POLITIKA" ARTICLE

Neue Zuercher Zeitung quotes two articles published in the Belgrade newspaper Politika in which Sava Kosanovic, Minister without Portfolio in the Yugoslav government, made disclosures contrary to the Communist Party stand on Communist actions and the attitude of the General Simovic government toward Germany in March - April 1941.

Suggesting that the controversy over the anovic affair me indicate "strong ideological disagreement" within the Communist anovic affair may leadership, Neue Zuercher Zeitung states that although the affair is being openly discussed in the press and in public. The attempt to introduce freedom of opinion in the party system shows little promise of success.

The signing of the 1941 German-Italian-Japanese tripartite agreement by Prime Minister Cvetkovic precipitated the 27 March 1941 coup d'état of Air Force General Simovic, which swept away the regime of Prince Regent Paul. Sava Kosancvic, one-time member of the Simovic-sponsored government, discloses in an article in Politika that he was approached at that time by a Communist delegation headed by Ivo-Lola Ribar. The delegates declared that they came to him, the member of the government with the strongest leftist orientation, to inform him of their strong apprehension that the government contained warmongers seeking to incite a war with Germany at any price. Kosanovic writes that this could not possibly represent the purely personal opinion of Ribar and his adherents.

This disclosure, which is in direct contradiction to the official party version of March - April 1941 events, is startling principally because of its publication in Folitika, a Belgrade daily, rather than in the emigrant press. Kosanovic even goes so far as to intimate that the Communist action was predicated on the friendship pact which existed at that time between the USSR and Hitler.

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The controversy was started by an article published on 27 March, the anniversary of the coup, presenting the accepted official party version, which had never been openly contested. According to this version, the Simovic putsch was not to be taken seriously. His government, it was held, would never have considered a real break with the pro-Axis policy of its predecessor. The Communist Party, representing the masses, was the sole champion of a definite anti-German policy.

Kosanovic first opposed this view in a short letter in which he merely defended his personal conduct. In a second article he stated quite frankly that the Simovic regime (including its head) had opposed collaboration with Hitler. He also stated that the government had the support of the people, even without Communist participation. Failure of the Simovic regime to prepare the country for defense against aggression was caused solely by pressure of time, since the Germans attacked Yugoslavia on 6 April 1941, 10 days after the Simovic coup

The name of the Croatian leader Macek now living in exile, also crops up in the controversy. Kosanovic relates that he himself traveled to Zagreb on 30 March 1941 to urge Macek to enter the government. His participation was necessary to emphasize Serbo-Croatian-Slovenian unity. The belief that Macek remained in Yugoslavia after the collapse of the Yugoslav army instead of going into exile with the other members of the government is characterized by Kosanovic as an historical error, and he brands Macek's departure from Yugoslavia together with that of Pavelic, the Fascist dictator of Croatia, as criminal.

These disclosures drew in the Communist editor in chief of <u>Politika</u>, who published an article in support of the Communist version. He brands Macek a traitor, calls him the protector of Pavelic and an accessory to his crimes, and accuses Kosanovic of a desire to whitewash the Creatian agrarian leader. That is the present state of the controversy. Kosanovic apparently intends to prolong the argument.

Sava Kosanovic, before the war a member of the Independent Democrats; he sided with Tito during the period of the government's exile in London. After the war he was appointed Ambassador to Washington. A year ago, when the Yugoslav government replaced him with a prominent Communist, Kosanovic was given an appointment as Minister without Portfolio. He is one of those who play a purely decorative role in Tito's regime. He is not a member of the Communist Party and consequently has no real power or influence. However, Kosanovic's position is completely unique in that he is permitted to stack the official line of the ruling party in a newspaper which has a wide circulation. Moreover, Kosanovic-has also had the opportunity to present his views at a round-table discussion arranged by the Belgrade Institute of International Politics.

It is highly improbable that the public airing of this controversy has taken place without the approval of the proper authority, in this instance the Communist Party Agitprop. Chief of the Agitprop is party dialectician Djilas, an openly enthusiastic advocate of individual freedom. Consequently, the Kosanovic affair would seem to indicate the existence of strong ideological disagreement within the Communist leadership, a favorable symptom of gradual release from its dogmatic contortions.

However, the attempt to introduce freedom of opinion within the framework of the Communist Party system shows little promise of success, and Kosanovic may well encounter a fate similar to that which befell the writer Coptic in autumn 1950. Coptic was permitted to publish a series of satires, in which he severely censured the privilege system of the state ruling group, until he was severely rebuked by Marshal Tito.

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On the other hand, the Kosanovic affair may represent a conciliatory gesture toward the bourgeois patriots to facilitate their adherence to Tito in these threatening times. The affair would thus demonstrate that in Tito's regime there is room for many, even for those who do not see in Macek only a traitor and a Fascist criminal. Such a policy by the People's Front in the face of the Soviet threat would not, however, indicate that the Yugoslav Communists are relaxing their determination to retain complete and undivided power.

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